

# Deskterm™ User Stories

**C**omputer users appreciate a Graphical User Interface (GUI) as they experience increased productivity and need less time getting up to speed with using new software. Anyone who has used a Macintosh before, knows this only too well.

However, the number of man years involved in migrating an application to X and adding a GUI such as Motif has deterred many software developers from moving down that path. Now, with the help of IXI's Deskterm, ISVs, VARs and MIS departments have found a viable way of moving their character-based applications to X.

Voted one of the Best Products of the Year in 1990 by UnixWorld magazine, Deskterm is a development tool that provides the only way of adding a Motif front-end onto an existing application. Two Deskterm customers, Uniplex and Tecsyes, explain why they chose the Deskterm approach.

## Uniplex

One of the first companies to license the Deskterm technology and use it to create an X Windows version of their software is Uniplex, the leading supplier of office automation software.

In 1989, Uniplex started to get requests, particularly from Federal customers, for an X Windows version of their software. The company calculated that it would take 40 man years to re-engineer their software to work directly with X and on discovering this, looked around for an alternative.

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As soon as they saw Deskterm, they looked no further. It took Uniplex only 2 man years to generate a GUI version of their suite of software which comprises word processing, spreadsheet, relational database, electronic mail, business graphics, time management and several utilities.

The Motif version of Uniplex Business Software is called Uniplex Windows and this has now been ported onto all the major UNIX platforms. The software runs in a windowed, mouse-driven graphical

environment featuring scroll bars, pushbuttons, resizable windows, cut and paste and multiple fonts and colors.

"The great thing about Deskterm is that our developers did not have to learn X Windows programming which is a completely different programming paradigm than the one they are used to," says Larry Warnock, Uniplex Director of Marketing.

This left Uniplex able to concentrate its time and money on building applications rather than wrestling with X and the Motif toolkit. Uniplex



### International Headquarters:

Hemel Hempstead, England

### US Headquarters:

Dallas, Texas

**Regional Offices:** Washington DC, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Boston, Paris, Munich.

**Number of Employees:** 300

**Nature of Business:** Leading developer of integrated office automation software

could utilize its existing pool of character-based programming expertise to bring a GUI version of the product to market years ahead of the competition.

At the heart of Deskterm is a powerful character protocol which implements traditional character terminal functionality and extends the capabilities to include GUI concepts such as

menus, dialogs, scroll bars and pushbuttons.

Depending upon whether the developer wishes to alter the source code of their application or not, Deskterm provides two ways of moving to X. The application can be augmented to make direct use of the advanced features of the protocol or Deskterm Soft Option can be used to add the interface without making any changes to the application.

Because Uniplex Business Software comprises a suite of 8 applications with common application libraries, Uniplex chose to alter the source code to work directly with the Deskterm protocol. At this



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time, Uniplex were developing Version 7.0 and so it was easy to incorporate the Deskterm changes with the rest of the work. Since many customer sites using the Uniplex Office Automation Software will be upgrading to the Motif version gradually, perhaps over a period of years, it's inevitable that the character-based and GUI versions of an application will sit side by side. The Deskterm approach means that there is only one source code to support so mixed environments don't give Uniplex any support or administration headaches.

Larry Warnock notes that Uniplex developers have been very pleased with the ease with which Deskterm can be used to develop Motif style applications. Uniplex's relationship with IXI continues to flourish. "We will be using Deskterm to develop future products," concluded Warnock.

## Tecsys

### Headquarters:

St Laurent, Quebec

**Number of employees:** 60

### Nature of business:

VAR of accounting and wholesale distribution software and a Distributor of UNIX-based software.

Tecsys, a Value Added Reseller, in St Laurent, Quebec shared a problem common to many VARs - how could they develop a Motif version of their Informix-4GL software if Informix Software products did not support Motif?

IXI's Deskterm gave Tecsys the opportunity to develop a Motif version of their software, a Financials and Wholesale Distribution application. Tecsys used the Deskterm Soft Option portion of Deskterm to allow a graphical interface to be constructed around the existing application.

The application is not aware that it is talking to an X display as Deskterm acts as a translator converting the application's character escape sequence calls into X protocol messages that the display understands and converting user interaction with the display into commands understood by the application.

"There are many well developed UNIX packages which simply need updating with a good GUI," said Marie-Josée Metivier, Vice President of Sales at Tecsys. "With Deskterm, developers can add a high-tech feel, giving their products good visibility within reasonable costs and timescales."

Another reason for choosing Deskterm was because it was the same system Uniplex used to move into the X environment. As the primary Canadian distributor of Uniplex Business Software, Tecsys looked for consistency, portability and ease of use when selecting a way of developing Motif applications.



When designing the Motif version of its Informix-4GL application, the company took great care to ensure that the interface on its software worked in the same manner as the interface that Uniplex had designed. This was important as the accounting and distribution software would be integrated

with Uniplex to provide a complete software solution. Using the Deskterm approach, Tecsys were able to generate a unified user interface for both applications, reducing the learning curve for their users.

Tecsys says IXI made the transition simple: "IXI provided us with superb Deskterm training. Our programmers became very excited about the new technology.

Deskterm added a whole new dimension for the developers, providing an instantly visible GUI to our function-rich system."

"Deskterm allows our software developers to be creative. It provides them with a flexible way of designing a more user-friendly interface to UNIX, and the more they can increase the functionality of our software, or develop new products, the more Tecsys will sell," concluded Metivier.

***"Deskterm added a whole new dimension for the developers, providing an instantly visible GUI to our function-rich system"***



Tecsys has translated the Uniplex software into Canadian French so it can address the Canadian marketplace, and has likewise provided support for Canadian French in its own Informix-4GL application. Since Deskterm has a full 8 bit interface, the Motif versions of both software will be able to address the Canadian marketplace with multiple language support.

# IXI



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